

Sublette LPDT Meeting
Thursday, February 13, 2014

Project updates:

Piney Creek Veg Restoration – Eric Peterson (Sublette County Conservation District) Eric was unavailable to provide comment; however, Chad Hayward (Forest Service) was able to provide an update. They are requesting \$50k from WLCI. This project really needs to have money in hand in order to get agreements with private lands and allotment permittees in place; however, the drop dead date for funds to be useful for this project is late September. This project started last year. The goals of this project are fire restoration, weed treatments, pasture rest/recovery, post-fire veg monitoring, and building 14-15 miles of fence. Project is ongoing, one more year of rest needed; project partners are meeting next month to continue coordination of the effort. They are putting information out about treatment efforts resulting from weed surveys. The size and scale of the project is dependent on funding. They are planning on using most of the WLCI funding to cover costs associated with livestock rest. Pasture is getting harder to find due to the drought in CA. They have an additional 300 head of cattle that need alternative pasture this year (above and beyond last year). Money is being forwarded through the Conservation District, as the BLM has an agreement in place.

Budget Update: Ian Glander (Acting High Desert District Assistant District Manager) stated that the early budget numbers are showing that WLCI will receive approximately \$700k under the Healthy Lands Initiative. Currently, BLM has received 25% of the money. The CT will be meeting to discuss the budget and funding of projects.

Olson New Fork: No update at this time.

Boulder Jonah Cheatgrass – Julie Kraft (Sublette County Weed and Pest): Annual request is for \$45k, CT asked if they would be able to do what they need to do with \$40k. Yes, this amount is to pay for the portion of the project of the aerial spraying. It costs about \$40/acre. Less money means fewer acres will be sprayed. Treatments are in October. Needs to book the helicopter, but would be ok to receive money in August. They treated 120 acres last year as herbicide cost less than expected last year. FY14 treatments will be in the Boulder Lake Area. This project is also receiving funding from the Sage-grouse Initiative. They still have a 1200 acre block of cheatgrass to treat and several small patches. The north side of the lake, where herbicide applications previously occurred, is looking good. Treatments are currently focusing on the south side of the lake.

New Fork River Infiltration of Trace Organics – Aida Farag (USGS): Aida was not present; Dave Harper (USGS) provided an update. The WLCI funding for FY13 was provided too late for them to utilize. The project objectives are to identify infiltration areas, retrieving water samples, and evaluating if there are any sources of influx into the river. Additional funding is needed to do additional water samples and to conduct analyses. Last year, they identified potential source locations. WLCI is proposing to provide \$2k for this project. USGS indicated that more funding would allow them to complete more sampling and analyses. The original proposal was for ~\$170,000. They received \$9k last year. WLCI can fund equipment and supplies, but not research. End result of the project would be a map based source of where the

influxes of trace organics are coming from. They would need the funding by end of July in order to use the money in FY14. The USGS cutoff date for using project funds is early August, a month prior to BLM's cut-off date.

Swift/Sullivan Trumpeter Swan Nest Site Enhancement - Susan Patla (WGFD): The project has \$109k in carryover funds. A new 5-year contract with WGFD was completed with BLM WLCI, which includes \$155,000 for the Sullivan wetland project. The new contract runs from July 2013 through July 31, 2018. No additional funding is being requested for FY14 through WLCI. The project is currently working on the Lazy River Ranch, owned by the Sullivan family. Cultural and NEPA work is complete. Dave Kimball (PFWS) is assisting with planning and obtaining permits for this project. Construction is planned for late fall or early winter. Another \$15,000 from the new contract is allocated for the Rimfire Ranch to correct some design flaws on the Trumpeter and Sago Ponds. All work has been completed on the Swift Ranch pond.

Funding Projects Past 5 years: The CT has asked all projects that have been on the books for 5 years or more to provide a new application for continuing funding. The longest term WLCI can enter into an agreement is 5 years. WLCI is requesting a new application in order for the CT to better tell the story of what has been done, what the plan is, and to ensure there isn't mission drift.

Wyoming Front Aspen Treatments – Greg Reser (BLM, not at meeting): Jill Randall provided information to the LPDT. Jill completed the new application for continued project funding; she believes that Greg sent it in. They would like to continue the annual request for funding. The NEPA for this project is being rolled into the NEPA for the Wyoming Mule Deer Project. They are planning to do mechanical work. Jill thinks they requested \$70k, but might be 50k. The NEPA is expected to be signed in May 2014. They plan to have projects on-the-ground by the end of June. They are requesting to receive the WLCI funding by the end of May.

Wyoming Range Mule Deer Habitat – Rusty Kaiser (BLM): This project is listed under Lincoln/Uinta; however it occurs both in Lincoln/Uinta and in Sublette. It is being handled under Sublette. Rusty was not able to attend; however Jill Randall (WGFD) provided an update. FY13 money was spent on NEPA, also did some weed mapping south of LaBarge, found a lot of locations for cheatgrass, and plan to treat in 2014. Couple thick places – some of the main roads, one rangeland stand that was about 80 acres; others are fairly small. They also found about 8 other noxious weeds in the area. It was a productive survey. After NEPA is completed, they plan to immediately set up the contracting. They want to be doing projects on-the-ground by the end of June, first of July. They are requesting the WLCI funding by the end of May 2014. This project is projected to receive \$50k for FY14.

Sage-grouse Dirt-Eating Study: Dale Woolwine was unavailable. Josh Hemingway provided the update. This project was presented last year to Ruby. An odd behavior was noticed among sage-grouse around the area. Biologists found sage-grouse returning to set locations around Boulder and consuming dirt around the winter time. This behavior has not been documented in literature. They want to examine this to see how it factors into selection of winter habitat. Additional locations of this behavior have been found. They have also found opportunities to expand collaboration. When they presented the project last year, they had found two locations,

now they have 15 locations around Pinedale. They are wondering if this is a rangewide behavior. Matt Halloran of Wyoming Wildlife Consultants has contacted a professor to see if they have sage-grouse with collars that could be utilized for this study. Bridger Teton National Forest is assisting with upper Green River basin collaring study. The project proponents have also contacted biologists at other BLM locations. Steve Germaine (USGS) has offered the use of some GPS collars. Partners want to present information at the Sage and Columbian basin workshop this year. They have requested \$20k or 25k funding from Ruby. They have received \$3k from the local working SG groups. The proposed study has four objectives. In order to get the first two objectives done, they would need about \$75k. They are pursuing other funding sources. Justin noted that the EC has approved this project for funding with Ruby dollars.

FY15 Project Proposals:

Upper Green River Swan Habitat Modeling Project – Lindsey Washkoviak (The Nature Conservancy(TNC)): Lindsay has been working with Susan Patla (WGFD) to plan an upper Green River habitat swan modeling project. In the 1990s, the WGFD initiated the swan expansion projects designed to increase summer and winter habitat and nesting pairs. Additional summer habitat is essential; they feel that more information is needed on habitat characteristics. They want to do a GIS and field-based study to estimate the amount of suitable habitat and to evaluate which parameters swans are selecting for nesting habitat. An end product of this project will include papers/publications and presentations. This study will be used to determine where future projects are needed. They hope to start field work in late summer of 2015. Projected total cost is \$40k. TNC would be doing the field work with a field tech. Aquatic vegetation surveys and landscape-level GIS modeling are planned. Susan stated this study would be really valuable, swans are growing exponentially; they are pioneering new sites, need to prioritize what new habitat would be beneficial. They have a template of what they think the swans need. Basin assessment that was done in 2012 will also provide some of this information. (handout)

Jill Randall on behalf of Miles Anderson (WGFD Pinedale): Fence conversions around Soda Lake and Fall Creek WSA. These areas have fences that are impeding migration. Sage-grouse are also found in this area. The project aims to convert these fences to wildlife-friendly standards, with some pole top fences around Soda Lake because of elk. Total projected cost for this project is just over \$100k. Jill was not sure on the total miles of fence. Due to rough terrain, it is more expensive to fix or convert these fences. They will tear down the old fences. They have some commitments from BLM and FS for providing materials. They have requested funding from the big game license committee, RMEF, and other partners. So far, they have not received a lot of support from these funding sources.

Julie Kraft – continuing project – partnership between W&P and BLM – base fundings for noxious weeds, survey and monitoring. They are requesting \$8k per year for the project time starting in 2015.

Project applications are due by **Monday, April 14, 2014**. The CT will compile and disseminate back to LPDTs. Project proponents are requested to provide a presentation of some sort at the May LPDT meeting. This doesn't have to be fancy; it can be PowerPoint or just a sitdown discussion. We ask that the project proponents or a representative be at the May meeting.

WLCI's funding has gone down over the last few years, just like everyone else. As we go forward, 65% of the monies received as BLM-funding goes for continuing projects, whatever is left goes to new projects. For continuing projects, we will probably ask for more than a paragraph update. We need to be able to report back and tell our story of how we are affecting landscape-scale priorities.

Prioritization Process: In past years, Sublette LPDT has given each agency or entity a vote. Well-presented projects, by an advocate that has partnerships in place typically do better. This group discussed the voting method and decided to stay with one vote for each agency/entity present at the May meeting.

CAP Update – Pat Anderson – The CAP will be out for review to all the LPDTs soon. The CAP is made up of three parts – first is large landscape level priorities; second is local team objectives; and third is a real detailed story showing what you are doing, what the LPDTs' priorities are, and what the LPDTs are planning to do. Pat will send out directions with the CAP. Pat asked everyone to focus on examining if the priority areas fit, do the boundaries make sense (not too big/too small), and do the maps appropriately depict your project area. WLCI wants to tell the story of how the past projects, current projects, and proposed projects tie together to work towards combined conservation objectives on a landscape-scale. The CAP writers have had to make some assumptions as sometimes this information is not clear in project write-ups/annual reports/etc. LPDTs will be given a 3-week period to review the CAP. The CAP team is also looking for suggestions on how to make the report more attractive. The CAP is a road map of WLCI's actions over the next five years. However, the report will also be used to tell WLCI's story to Agencies and to hand out to industry proponents who may be looking for opportunities to assist in on-the-ground projects. The CAP team would like to have the CAP finalized by the June EC Meeting.

WLCI Science Workshop Update – Amy Nicholas: The WLCI Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) met and has started planning next workshop. They are exploring different possibilities, including combining with the Science Workshop with the annual meeting of the Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS). Reasons behind this are budgets cut, travel cuts, benefit for WLCI to hear about more on-the-ground projects, and on-the-ground managers presenting along with USGS science work. This way the Science Workshop would be able to draw a broader range of participants. STAC went to TWS business meeting – they are open to the idea. They are transitioning to a new president, so they won't vote until that person is elected. Traditionally, the Science Workshop has been held in May; if we combine, we would probably be moving the meeting to the fall/winter of 2015. Jill noted that the 2014 annual meeting will be in Sheridan, so hopefully the 2015 meeting will be closer to the WLCI area.

Tour Ideas for the EC Meeting(s): The EC is looking for summer tours ideas. It was mentioned that a tour for WWNRT was done last year – demonstrates excellent partner collaboration. June probably won't work to show projects around Pinedale; September would work (except for hunting). Jill mentioned several different projects in the area – cheatgrass, Fontenelle Fire, WY mule deer; aspen front range. Julie also volunteered that for June, there are

several accessible weed treatment locations that could be seen in June – several years work could be shown. Any other thoughts/suggestions – send an email or call a CT member.

Next Sublette LPDT meeting is set for **Thursday, May 15, 2014**, at 10am – BLM Pinedale.